

Fort Des Moines Historic Complex,  
Building 49  
(Post Chapel)  
Des Moines  
Polk County  
Iowa

HABS No. IA-121-E

HABS  
IOWA,  
71-DESMO,  
24-E-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225

HABS No. IA-121-E

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IOWA,  
77-DESMO,  
24-E-

Building No. 49. Post Chapel

The post chapel, erected between April and September 29, 1910, at a cost of \$11,957.00 (including furniture), was built of brick joined in running bond with red-pigmented mortar on a foundation of brick and concrete, and had a slate roof. Its Gothic features contrasted with the Classical Revival features of the other post buildings. It stood on the east side of the parade near the northeast corner. The main building measures 36 feet by 57 feet, while a rear wing measures 18 feet 3 inches by 37 feet 2 inches. Built according to the Quartermaster General's standardized plan 261, the chapel has a capacity of 226 persons. The front and rear walls of the main building extend in a gabled parapet with limestone cap, a characteristic repeated on the rear wing. A single chimney stands atop the north side of the wing, while a limestone crucifix tops the entry gable. The front of the main building has a Tudor arched entrance beneath a projected gabled cornice. Double doors have decorative false hinge straps. A trefoil light is above the doors.

Two Tudor arched stained glass windows with diamond pattern and Gothic arch tracery are on either side of the double door. Above the doorway is a louvered ventilator with a flat limestone arch and a lug sill. Modern concrete steps lead to the vestibule, its roof displaying limestone ornamentation. Similarly, limestone-capped brick buttresses adjoin the sides and corners of the vestibule. On either side of the building, more wall buttresses equidistantly segregate five Tudor arched stained glass windows. All windows have plain lug limestone sills. Basement windows each have three lights, with single-coursed flat segmental arches. The rear addition on the north side has an entrance with a single door with decorative false hinge strap and a 3-light transom. Also, the basement entry on the east side has a side door beneath a 2-course segmental arch. A double hung 6-over-6 light window has an identical arch. At the back of the wing (east side) is an ornate rose window with a semicircular lintel.

The interior of the chapel comprised 2406 square feet divided as follows:

Vestibule, 9' x 4' 6"  
Auditorium, 33' 6" x 54' 6"  
Choir, 10' x 21'  
Chancel, 8' x 21'  
Organ space, 5' x 8'  
Vestibule, 4' x 9'  
Vestry, 8' x 11'

As constructed, the insides walls were plastered. The pitch of the ceiling was determined by the scissors truss of the roof members. Beneath the rear wing was a heater room, approximately 23 feet by 17 feet, a coal room, 8 feet 4 inches by 11 feet 3 inches, plus two small rooms, one 3 feet 11 inches by 7 feet 1 inch, the other 4 feet 1 inch by 6 feet 5 inches. Radiated steam heat originally warmed the building, and it was built with electric lighting. In 1938, several of the radiators were replaced by two Perfex Unit Heaters at a cost of \$351.85.

The exterior of the chapel has been restored to its ca. 1910 appearance. The interior has been restored to its appearance ca. 1932. Inside, steel tension rods were added to the modified scissors trusses. Decorative stenciling and painting of an art deco style highlights the windows and chancel, as well as the underside of the trusses. Indirect lighting from a perimeter valance was installed. Furniture consists of a wood altar, an altar piece, trim around the rose window, a communion fence, a baptistry, a lectern, and pews, all of which reflect a Gothic design motif. A chamfered archway separates the nave from the chancel. Beneath the rose window is a copper plaque that reads:

Dedicated to the memory of  
Frederick Towle Myers  
by his son  
Selim Woodworth Myers Captain Infantry US Army

In the narthex at the main entrance, as well as in the nave, the wainscoat is of scored stucco. A small room at the northeast corner contains a lavatory and toilet. A hot air furnace replaced the old steam heat unit. The restoration was completed in 1982 by Bert Newsom Construction of Des Moines. Dedication occurred in May, 1983.(19)

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19. Card for Building No. 49. "Historical Record of Buildings." NA, RG 77, Box 51. Plan, "Chapel," No. 261, September, 1909, 4 sheets. NA, RG 77. Cartographic Archives; Photograph of April 30, 1910, in Building 100, USAR, Fort Des Moines; Field survey notes, February 20-22, 1987.